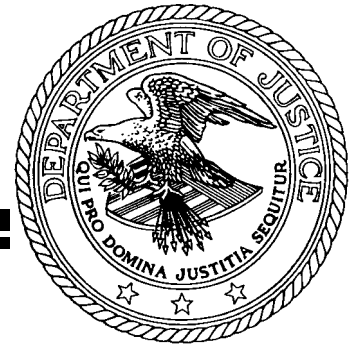


NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney
Carol C. Lam***

For Further Information, Contact: Assistant United States Attorney Richard C. Cheng (619) 557-7136

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - December 30, 2003

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced the indictment today of an individual involved in smuggling a group of undocumented aliens across the Colorado River at the border area between California and Arizona. The group consisted of at least three Chinese nationals attempting to reach the Arizona side of the Colorado River during the evening of December 16, 2003. During the course of the rescue and apprehension of the group, United States Border Patrol Agent James Epling died of apparent drowning.

A federal grand jury in San Diego has handed up a twelve-count indictment charging JOSE ANTONIO VASQUEZ-VILLASENOR with bringing in illegal aliens resulting in death, transportation of illegal aliens resulting in death, bringing in illegal aliens for financial gain, and transportation of illegal aliens.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Richard Cheng, who is prosecuting the case, the three Chinese nationals have been detained as material witnesses and may be ordered to remain in custody until the case is concluded.

If convicted of count one or two, the defendant faces a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and/or a \$250,000 fine. The charges of bringing in aliens for financial gain carry a maximum penalty of ten years

imprisonment with a minimum mandatory sentence of three years imprisonment for each count and/or a \$250,000 fine.

United States Attorney Lam said that the United States Attorney's office will continue to aggressively prosecute to the fullest extent of the law any individuals that endanger not only the lives of undocumented aliens entering the United States, but those in law enforcement who are entrusted with the protection of this nation's borders.

The defendant appeared before the Honorable Roger T. Benitez, United States Magistrate Judge at the United States Courthouse in El Centro, California, this afternoon, Tuesday, December 30, 2003 at 1:30 p.m. He was arraigned on the indictment and detained without bail pending trial. The defendant is scheduled to appear next on January 20, 2004 at 8:15 a.m., before the Honorable Napoleon A. Jones, Jr., United States District Court Judge in San Diego, California for motion setting.

DEFENDANT

JOSE ANTONIO VASQUEZ-VILLASENOR

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

COUNTS 1, 5, and 9	Bringing in illegal alien resulting in death in violation of Title 8, United States Code, § 1324(a)(1)(A), (v)(II) and (a)(1)(B)(iv) and Aiding and Abetting.
COUNTS 2, 6 and 10	Transportation of illegal alien resulting in death in violation of Title 8, United States Code, § 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii), (v)(II) and (a)(1)(B)(iv) and Aiding and Abetting.
COUNTS 3, 7 and 11	Bringing in illegal alien for financial gain in violation of Title 8, United States Code, § 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) and Aiding and Abetting.
COUNTS 4, 8 and 12	Transportation of illegal alien in violation of Title 8, United States Code, § 1324(a)(1)(A)(II) and Aiding and Abetting.

AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
United States Border Patrol

An indictment is not evidence that the defendant committed the crime charged. The defendant is presumed innocent until the United States meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.